

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2735

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR

USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2505

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN MEDIA SUMMARY FOR APRIL 16-18, 1977

1. SUMMARY: MAIN ARTICLES DEALT WITH ASAD'S MOSCOW VISIT AND CELEBRATION OF EVACUATION DAY. MOST INTERESTING ARTICLES AND COMMENTARIES, HOWEVER, DEALT WITH LEBANON. IMPORTANT EDITORIAL SET FORTH SYRIAN CONCEPTION OF HOW RECONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD SHOULD PROCEED IN VIEW OF LULL IN FIGHTING IN SOUTH. MEDIA PLAY SUGGESTED SYRIAN EAGERNESS TO MAKE PROGRESS BEFORE ANY NEW INCIDENTS FURTHER EXACERBATE TENSIONS IN LEBANON. CALLS MADE FOR CARRYING OUT CAIRO AGREEMENT IN STAGES AND BY REGIONS WHICH WOULD

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BE SIMULTANEOUSLY ACCOMPANIED BY RECONSTRUCTION LEBANESE ARMY AND OTHER NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. WARNINGS AGAIN DELIVERED AT FACTIONS WHICH TRY TO PLACE CONDITIONS ON EXECUTING THESE PLANS. BAATH PARTY OFFICIAL DELIVERED SPEECH WARNING PALESTINIANS AGAINST STRESSING THEIR OWN IDENTITY TO DETRIMENT OF PAN-ARAB GOALS. END SUMMARY.

2. LEAD ARTICLES FOCUSSED ON CELEBRATION EVACUATION DAY (APRIL 17) AND ASAD'S TRIP TO SOVIET UNION. SEVERAL SYRIAN NEWSPAPERS PROMINENTLY REPORTED CONGRATULATORY CABLES ASAD RECEIVED ON OCCASION. FRONT PAGE BOX CAPTIONED "ASAD RECEIVES CONGRATULATORY CABLES FROM BREZHNEV AND PODGORNYY, AND CARTER," CARRIED TEXTS OF THE TWO MESSAGES.

3. WHILE MEDIA HAS BEEN DISCUSSING NEED TO IMPLEMENT CAIRO AGREEMENT AND REBUILD SHATTERED LEBANESE NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, TONE OF LATEST EDITORIALS SUGGESTS THAT SYRIA ATTEMPTING SPEED-UP PROCESS DURING LULL IN FIGHTING IN SOUTH. LEAD EDITORIAL APRIL 18 BY SENIOR BAATH COLUMNIST AMID AL-KHULI MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

--TIME IS RIGHT FOR COMMENCING IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO AGREEMENT IN STAGES WHICH WILL ACT AS CATALYST TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR RECONSTRUCTING CONSTITUTIONAL AND EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONS IN LEBANON.

--THESE ACTIONS ARE RECIPROCAL AND COMPLEMENTARY.

--NO ONE SHOULD ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE PRECONDITIONS ON PRIORITIES ON EXECUTION OF THESE ACTIONS.

--THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH WHICH WAS BLOCKING THIS PROCESS RECONSTRUCTION IS NOT DOING SO AT THE MOMENT AND THIS SHOULD BE EXPLOITED "WITHOUT HESITATION."

--SARKIS HAS STARTED PROCESS OF REBUILDING NATIONAL  
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INSTITUTIONS MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH ARE THE ARMY AND INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES SO THAT THEY CAN PLAY THEIR NATIONAL ROLE UPON WHICH OTHER ACTIONS DEPEND.

--SARKIS WILL NOT BE DEFLECTED BY MARGINAL CONSIDERATIONS SINCE WHAT MOTIVATES HIM (REBUILDING LEBANON) IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FACTIONAL INTERESTS. "IN THIS HE WILL HAVE FULL SUPPORT OF LEBANESE PEOPLE AND SYRIA WITH ALL ITS MILITARY AND POLITICAL CAPABILITIES."

COMMENT: WHILE ALL THESE THEMES HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY PLAYED, THIS IS THE CLEAREST PUBLIC STATEMENT YET, OF POLICIES SYRIA WISHES TO SEE IMPLEMENTED IN LEBANON DURING COMING WEEKS.

4. BAATH ALSO FEATURED ARTICLE ON FRONT PAGE QUOTING "POLITICAL AND PARLIAMENTARY SOURCES" VOICING OPTIMISM THAT CURRENT RELATIVE CALM IN SOUTH WILL PERMIT IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO AGREEMENTS THERE. "SOME INFORMED SOURCES SAID

THE CONSULTATIONS WHICH WERE CONDUCTED RECENTLY HAVE RESULTED IN AGREEMENT ON CARRYING OUT CAIRO AGREEMENT IN STAGES SO THAT IT BEGINS IN BEIRUT AND SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE SECTIONS OF THE COUNTRY WITH IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTH LEFT FOR LATER STAGE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SPECIFIC TIMETABLE TO BE AGREED UPON AMONG CONCERNED PARTIES. THESE SOURCES INDICATED THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO AGREEMENT SHOULD GO HAND IN HAND WITH EXECUTING ALL RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY RIYADH AND CAIRO SUMMITS RELEVANT TO REUNIFICATION OF OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS UNTIL CALMNESS AND SECURITY PREVAIL OVER ALL OF LEBANON." ARTICLE CONTINUED BY NOTING KUWAIT WAS HOLDING CONTACTS WITH PALESTINIAN LEADERS IN ATTEMPT TO BRING ABOUT AGREEMENT ON THESE ISSUES BETWEEN PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE SIDES. IT STATED THAT QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE WOULD RESUME ITS WORK ON APRIL 21 SINCE "SOME OBSTACLES WHICH PREVENTED IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO AGREEMENT UNTIL NOW WILL HAVE BEEN UNCLASSIFIED

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ELIMINATED THROUGH UNOFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED AMONG THE PARTIES."

5. NEW ADF COMMANDER SAMI AL-KHUTIB GAVE INTERVIEW TO THAWRA WHICH APPEARED APRIL 17. HE NOTED THAT RECENT EXTENSION ADF MANDATE INDICATED ITS ASSIGNED MISSION HAD NOT YET BEEN REALIZED. HE SAW ITS ROLE AS "PREPARING PROPER ATMOSPHERE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY OFFICIALS TO RECONSTRUCT ARMY WHICH IS PRIMARY TASK OF CURRENT LEBANESE MILITARY COMMAND. UNTIL THE LEBANESE ARMY COMMAND ABLE TO ASSUME ITS ROLE, THERE MUST BE PARTY THAT UNDERTAKES THIS ROLE." HE CONTINUED THAT "ADF IS CAPABLE OF CONTAINING ANY INCIDENT AT ANY TIME, AND WE WILL NOT ALLOW ANY PARTY TO STOP PEACE PROCESS OR OBSTRUCT IT WHATEVER THE FACTION OR REASONS. WE ARE SERIOUS IN THIS, AND COMING DAYS WILL PROVE WHAT WE SAY AND IN WHAT WE BELIEVE."

6. PRESS APRIL 17 REPORTED SPEECH OF BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMANDER MEMBER AND FORMER MININFO GEORGE SADDIQNI DELIVERED AT INVITATION OF PLA AT PALESTINIAN YARMOUK CAMP. TALK BASICALLY MADE POINT THAT IT WAS FINE FOR PALESTINIANS TO DISCUSS THEIR PALESTINIAN IDENTITY IN MAKING THEIR CASE TO WORLD PUBLIC OPINION, BUT THEY SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THEIR STRUGGLE WAS PART OF ARAB NATIONAL REVOLUTION. TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE TO "TRANSFORM IT (THE STRUGGLE) FROM INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE TO REGIONALISM AND ISOLATIONISM. (COMMENT: THESE ARE VERY NASTY EPITHETS IN THE BAATHI PAN-ARAB LEXICON). THE GREATEST LOSS TO THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE IS TO SEPARATE IT FROM THE MOTHER CAUSE--THAT OF ARAB NATIONALISM."

COMMENT: SADDIQNI'S STATEMENTS ARE NOT SURPRISING IN THE  
CONTEXT OF BAATHIST IDEOLOGY, BUT PUBLICITY HIS REMARKS  
GIVEN POINTS UP AMBIVALENCE OF SOME SARG AND BAATH PARTY  
OFFICIALS TOWARDS CALLS FOR CREATION OF FULLY INDEPENDENT  
PALESTINIAN STATE AND STRESSING OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY  
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TO DETRIMENT OF GREATER PAN-ARAB CONSIDERATIONS.  
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## Message Attributes

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